

NewsRelease

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

Langley Research Center
Hampton, VA 23681-2199



H. Keith Henry
(757) 864-6120/24

For Release: Feb. 9, 1999

RELEASE NO. 99-009

NOTE TO EDITORS: YOU'RE INVITED TO SEE AND TOUCH

High-tech personal airplanes visit NASA Thursday

The first two personal airplanes that make extensive use of NASA-inspired technology will pay a courtesy visit to NASA Langley Thursday, Feb. 11. News media are invited to view the aircraft on the floor of the Main Hangar, building 1244, at 1 p.m. Call Keith Henry at (757) 864-6120 or (757) 715-0148 for details and to confirm your interest.

These pioneering four-to-six-seat airplanes boast of value, performance, comfort and safety. Each received its flight certification last Fall and are being built now for eager first customers. The airplanes are the Cirrus SR20, built by Cirrus Design Corp., Duluth, Minn., and the Lancair Columbia 300, built by Lancair International Inc., Redmond Bend, Ore.

Development of the technologies was fostered by the Advanced General Aviation Transports Experiment (AGATE) -- a NASA Langley-led consortium of more than 70 members from industry, universities, the Federal Aviation Administration and other government agencies.

The technologies reflected in these first SR-20 and Columbia 300 models contribute to ease of operation through single-lever power control -- a concept that makes flying an airplane more like driving a car -- and multi-function display of satellite navigation and airport information. The display technology will also handle graphical display of real-time weather, terrain and digital air-to-ground communications when available in the near future. Other technologies reflected in these new airplanes include advanced lightweight and aerodynamically-efficient composite materials such as graphite-epoxy. Safety advances are seen in energy-absorbing structures and improved safety harness systems that improve crashworthiness.

Also on Thursday, NASA will announce the selection of an industry team for the final development of a virtual "highway in the sky" navigation system. The system, to be designed for the large-format, flat-panel display in the SR-20 and in future models of the Columbia 300, will include a computer-drawn "highway" that the pilot will follow to a preprogrammed destination.

- more -

- 2 -

The visiting airplanes represent a significant step toward the ultimate national goal of safe, affordable, easy-to-fly personal airplanes that will fly from neighborhood "smart airports" of the future at four times the speed of automobiles.

- end -

NOTE: NASA Langley, Lancair and Cirrus officials will be available for interview. Video B-roll will include NASA animation and SR-20 and Columbia 300 flight sequences.